

FORCED APART

By W. CLARK RUSSELL

Author of the "Wreck of the Grosvenor,"
"A Sailor's Sweetheart," Etc.

CHAPTER XXII.

ALONE.

Upstairs lay Jenny, in the deep slumber which profound weariness in youth begets; the solemn sleep that, like death, smooths the countenance into an expression for which human knowledge has no definition. Without a stir in her face, and the mysterious sweetness of her face was a sight for love to look upon with fear.

Suddenly she started, and awoke with one of those quick leaping from sleep which the sleepless soul will force the body into, and start erect, with a frown of bewilderment, and her beautiful eyes alarmed and eager. She had no watch to tell the hour, but upon the carpet lay a streak of sunshine, and the mellow glory of it was a hint to draw her quickly to the window.

The sun was high, and a splendor of noontide upon the land. In sure belief that she had overslept the hour for the passing of the coach, she took her hat in her hand and went downstairs. The first thing she beheld was the big Dutch clock just beside the door; the hands of it pointed to the quarter past ten, so that Marples was not to be reached that day without posting.

With her eyes fixed upon the clock, she stood on the last step of the staircase, and her baffled intentions plainly showed in the wonder and embarrassment of her face—until Mrs. Walker threw open the glass door of the bulkhead dividing the passage from what would now be termed the bar, and, dropping her a little courtesy, hoped that she was the better for her rest.

"But I have missed the coach, I fear," said Jenny, "if that clock be right."
"It is right enough, ma'am. But Mrs. Mead is in the parlor, and will tell thee how this happened, if she be not sleeping," replied Mrs. Walker, with something like a look of contrition on her face, if it were not nervousness.

Without further words Jenny pushed open the parlor door, and there, sure enough, at full length upon the sofa, was Mrs. Mead asleep.

But Jenny was in straits which would not permit of tender thoughtfulness. She wanted to know why she had been allowed to miss the coach, and what she was now to do. And so gave Mrs. Mead a push, which set the old woman talking in her sleep. "Ay, ay, these needn't be bother—the Lord love us—an' it's as true as this hand—yew!"

"Mrs. Mead! Mrs. Mead!"
The old woman opened her eyes, stared at Jenny, lifted her head, gave a terrific yawn, and, planting her loose knuckles into the network about her eyes, exclaimed in a smothering voice, "I've bin asleep, I do believe!"
"Mrs. Mead, it's a quarter past ten, and the coach has been gone this long while. Oh, why was I allowed to sleep! I shall not get away this day; and here must I stop, for I have not money enough to hire a post chaise!" cried Jenny.

"Sit down, mistress, and think a bit before ye quarrel. For maybe I'll be showing ye that it's no fault of mine ye've missed the coach, and then how sorrowful would your heart be for being angry with Mother Mead, who loves you," said the old woman, continuing to rub her eyes until all the sleep was squeezed out of them. "Sally, Sally!" she squeaked; and on Mrs. Walker running in, Mrs. Mead exhorted her to procure breakfast at once for Jenny, and to look in upon them again presently, which was as good as saying, "Don't listen now, at all events."

"You must not think I could be angry with you," said the girl, mournfully, "but it is a sad thing for me to lose the coach; for I hoped to be with Bridget this day, and in a quiet place, where I could think how I am to act in the future."

"And what's to stop you thinking here?" exclaimed Mrs. Mead. "Isn't it quiet enough—for hours together ye shall hear no sound but the hens talking and scraping in the road. Besides, it's nearer thy home now Marples. And Jenny, Mrs. Jenny! I'll own to thee it's my fault ye missed the coach; and it were my wish ye should. What did I say to 'e last night? Dreadful scandal will follow you when folks hear you have run away, and I will not help thee to be foolish."

Jenny looked at her with astonishment and fear. Whatever force the objection might still possess, she thought that Mrs. Mead had put it aside for good and all when she offered to walk with her to Winston.

"Give yourself time to think," continued the old woman. "If ye should have a mind to return to your mother, 'tis an easy walk from here; if you will still go forward, then the coach will be at this door to-morrow morn. But ye be taking a mighty step in quitting home without ever letting a cratur but me know where you've gone. It's because I love you that I've let you miss the coach, and given you a whole day for reflection w' th' house close at hand."

"My mind is quite made up," said Jenny, moving restlessly about the room. "I will not return home."

"Well, that you say now, but by and by you will be thinking another way," said Mrs. Mead, with evident sense of superiority, "I am grieved to have missed the coach, but I am not angry," she went on, in a subdued but firm tone. "It will be dull work for me here all day; for I suppose you will return to Greystone?"

The old woman nodded. Jenny looked at her hand.

"Mrs. Mead, be frank with me. What do you mean to do? Shall you tell mother where I am?"

"I'll not answer ye," replied the old woman rather sulkily, not liking Jenny's sharpness.

"You have sworn to keep my secret," said the girl reproachfully.

"Suppose the first man I met in the street should be Mr. Shaw?" cried the old woman, in a shrill voice.

Jenny turned to the window and looked through it in silence.

"See now, my dearie," said Mrs. Mead mildly; "will ye let me judge how to act for you? If you were my child I could not wish you better than I do; and thy fame, which must be the dearest thing a woman hath, is my reason for hindering your journey this day. Neither you nor me knows what is being said! Greystone, and things may happen to-day to make ye thankful you had not all the way from Marples to come. Bide here while I go to Greystone. I'll find out about thy mother, and how she bears thy going, and what is said of thee, and all that should be known. And to-night will I return with what news there is; and it shall either be that you return to thy home again, or go straight on into the world, as shall seem best on what report I bring you."

If Mrs. Mead had said this at first, Jenny would have understood her motives. But, says an ancient adage: "When you hear an old woman talk straight, you shall see your cow walk on its hind legs."

"There may be good sense in what you say," replied Jenny, who had turned from the window and stood with her fine eyes fixed on Mrs. Mead; "and here will I stop till you come back. But truly I do not know that any news you could bring should take me home again. For when father misses me his anger will be terrible, and not to save my life would I face him without proof that I am an honest girl."

At this moment Mrs. Walker came in with Jenny's breakfast. She chose to prepare the table herself, that she might have a good sight of the young wife; for Jenny was a wonderful heroine in the hostess's eyes, and created a chance for imagination to chew upon that deserved to be made much of.

"Your papa is known to me, ma'am," said she, courtesying, in token that the breakfast was ready. "I heard him preach a sermon once—nay, it were a lecture, as I remember—in St. Martin's hall, down Beach street, in your town. He hath a strong voice, and is a fine man, as I think. Is he quite well?"

With a sad smile Jenny answered her; and as she seated herself at the table, Mrs. Mead asked Sally about the wagon that was to carry her to Greystone.

"Johnny shall put the horse to when it pleases ye," replied Sally.

"The sooner the better," said the old woman.

The so-called wagon was a small metamorphosed cart, with a canvas hood, and wheels stout enough to support a horse. In ten minutes' time it was at the door, and on the near shaft of it sat, with his hobnail boots within a foot of the road, a sour-faced man, who sucked an inverted pipe, and doggedly combed himself off the rough hide of the horse with a whip. Sally came into the parlor to announce it, and Mrs. Mead at once got up and put on her old bonnet and shawl.

"I shall find ye here when I come back," said she, interrogatively, holding Jenny's hand.

"Yes, I will wait for you," replied the girl, wearily, with the now familiar absent look in her eyes.

The old woman hobbled out of the room after her friend, and, with a hard expression of misery on her face, Jenny went to the sofa and leaned her head upon it.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MRS. MEAD RETURNS TO GREYSTONE.

"I know I'm doin' right. Niver could I hold up my head if they got saying it were Judith Mead as helped Michael's girl to run away and leave her character behind her," said Mrs. Mead to herself as the wagon drove off; and upon a loosened truss of hay she sat, right in the center of the vehicle, staring out of the shadow at the pretty little inn that was dropping behind.

It was eleven o'clock when they arrived at the top of the High street of Greystone.

"Thell do, mister," exclaimed Mrs. Mead, who had no opinion of Johnny as a driver, and was weary of the jolting inflicted on her, and the miserably slow way they made; "ye needn't go no further."

Johnny, however, refused to take any notice of her request. There was an old house some distance down the street, and not until the wagon was abreast of it did he cry, "Whoa!" Then dropping from his perch, with a trifle of briskness in the action, he came round to the back of the cart, and said, "Ye can get down here if ye like."

The old woman scrambled down as best she could, and Johnny looked on with a grin at her boots. The correcting his smile as she faced round upon him, he said:

"This here's the Wheat-sheaf, and the flavey in the liquor is as foine as though 'twar all roon stoof."

"Ye're welcome to drink as much as iver they'll trust ye with," replied Mrs. Mead tartly.

"Aren't ye goin' to stand summat?" cried the man.

"Yes, half a pint o' vinegar, if ye're good to drink it," answered the old woman.

"Go along, or I'll get ye drownt for a witch," shouted the disappointed Johnny; and off he went, chuckling audibly.

Not ten yards, however, could she go without meeting an acquaintance. Who should this be but old Mrs. Bruff, going to her snuff shop in George street, with her dinner in a paper parcel.

"Good mornin', Mrs. Mead. How are you? 'Tis an age sin I seen ye my way."

"I'm middlin' well, thank 'ee, Mrs. Bruff. As to comin' your way, what hath snuff to say to a lone old cratur that counts her valley in fardens? The flies, they do tickle, truly. Them and the dogs knows what's good," exclaimed Mrs. Mead, with a glance at the paper parcel. "And doth not the parson say that prosperity draws strange things to it?"

"Ye're allers quizzing, Mrs. Mead. Prosperity, indeed! Five and fourpence was my airings last week; scarce three loaves in it—thanks to them wagabone French, as it's a mussy for them I ain't a man."

"Well, and ye give me no news? That two gossips should roast if this heat with nothing to say! But they're wonderful liars? Greystone," said Mrs. Mead.

"News—to thee?" cried Mrs. Bruff, with a ludicrous toss of the head. "Why, here I stand for truth; for, as you say, they're dreadful liars? Greystone."

"The truth o' what?"

"But you know?" exclaimed Mrs. Bruff, looking at her old companion with absurd incredulity in her face.

"I do not know," replied Mrs. Mead, with the eagerness of a born gossip. "I am this minute arrived from Winston, and if anything hath happ'd I'm as strange to it as an unborn infant."

"Why, then," said Mrs. Bruff, speaking slowly, and with evident sense of superiority, "it's everywhere towd that Mike Strangfield's wench hath run away for shame o' the wrong done her by Dr. Shaw's son. But that's not it, neither. Not twenty minutes since, I met Deacon Skelton, who says to me, 'Is it true, Mrs. Bruff, that my brother Strangfield is dead?' The Lord forbid," I says, 'I hope not, Mr. Skelton.' 'I'm afraid he is, then,' he says. 'Jim Mason,' he says, him as keeps the Blue Postbox, had the news from Tom Raffles, as is cousin to the Strangfields' servant; Polly her name is. She was sent for the doctor, but came fust in fright to her mother—who's kept her bed sin' April, poor wretch—an' says that Strangfield's fell down in a fit, and a dead man." "Lord bless me, sir!" says I.

"That's news indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Mead, very pale, and catching up her dress.

"If it's true, it's as strange a visitation as any that iver I read of in Holy Writ. Good-by to ye. You've put me in a hurry, Mrs. Bruff. Lord save us! what wonderful things happen in this life!"

She was limping rapidly away before Mrs. Bruff could return her farewell.

She was too experienced a gossip herself to believe in the accuracy of any story related; but then, likewise, she well knew that almost never does any story get abroad without foundation. They may say there's a flame where there is only a spark; but be sure there is fire of some kind.

Hastily down the street she went. Arrived at her home, she washed her face, brushed her hair, dusted her bonnet and shoes, and, glancing at the cupboard, to make sure of a bit of dinner to be cooked on her return, she sallied forth once more, and walked direct to Strangfield's house.

No outward and visible sign there was of anything being amiss.

Mrs. Mead knocked softly, and, with unconscious bled in her by the dislike bore her by the Strangfields, kept herself close, that she might not be spied by any sideways glance from the window. No one responding, she knocked again loudly, and presently the door was opened by Mrs. Strangfield herself.

The desolate white and grief of the poor woman's face was indeed something heart-

moving to behold. The utter forlornness of the eyes, the piteous droop of the mouth, the dishevelment of hair and attire, which into grief throws a violent dramatic element, were beyond expression. She looked at Mrs. Mead, while the old lady bobbed a courtesy, as a person to whom everything that offers has a meaning cruelly hard to master.

"God forbid, mistress," said Mrs. Mead, "ye should think I am come out of evil curiosity. They say the deacon hath been stricken ill, and positively would I know this from one who hath the truth."

"Why do you come here for now? This is a house of mourning now. I am a desolate, lonely woman. Heaven help me," replied Mrs. Strangfield in a broken voice.

"So, indeed, ye be, if it is only for your daughter's leavin' ye," said Mrs. Mead, with deep compassion. "But what hath happ'd to the deacon? For the Lord's sake let me hear it of you, ma'am!"

"He hath been struck with paralysis, and lie dyin' and calling for his daughter. That is the truth. And now must I go to him, for your knock has brought me from his bed, and the maid is away on an errand, and I am alone in the house."

She spoke with stolidity of exhausted grief, and was stepping back to close the door.

"Stay!" cried Mrs. Mead, "I bring thee news of thy child!"

The mother wheeled round with a shriek, and with both hands seized her arm.

"What of her? Is she living?"

"Living and well. Not an hour ago I left her."

Mrs. Strangfield had no words. The sudden dispersion of the fears that had torn her heart was a moral convulsion that deprived her of speech. She stood with her fingers clutching hard the old woman's arm. Then incoherently she spoke.

"Sweet girl! How hath she been wronged! My pretty one! Alive, indeed, and I have been praying for thee. Oh, what a sorrow to befall the pure in heart! God forgive us!"

She dropped and leaned toward Mrs. Mead, and brought up the old hand to her mouth and kissed it, weeping the while such tears as only mothers weep.

"Alive and well!" she burst out again. "Dear heart, to bring me such good tidings! Come in, come in! God is good to send thee! Dear heart, what joy you give me!"

With drops trickling down her furrowed cheeks, Mrs. Mead suffered herself to be drawn into the house by the passionate mother.

"Quick, now, dear friend," cried Mrs. Strangfield, feverishly. "Tell me where my girl is! Is she in Greystone? Oh, my poor heart!"

"She is at Winston, at the Greyhound there, and you may go and fetch her, and tell her what bliss hath fallen on thee, or she will not return. Oh, she is bitter—and rightly so!" quavered the old woman, in a voice strangely composed of indignation and sympathy.

"Niver, she swears, will she come to her home again, to be despised and thought vilely of. For her dying father she may come—but you must fetch her, mistress."

"Come! Oh, she will come when she sees my face, and hears that her father lies moaning for her. Besides, hath not Dr. Shaw proved her a married woman? Ay, this very mornin', Mrs. Mead, he came to bring us written proof of my Jenny's marriage with Cuthbert Shaw! But how can I leave my husband?" she cried, distractedly. "The doctor says he must be watched. And how can I fetch my Jenny and be with my poor Michael?"

"Well, well! truly proved married! And she hath told no lies, then?" gasped Mrs. Mead. "The Lord forgive ye for all the pain you have given her. What did she say?"

"Her husband wants nursing! While ye're gone I'll watch by him. I've nursed a many I my time. He'll be his mind!"

"Yes, he lies still—he has no power in one arm—and he groans sadly. He calls for Jenny, and—Oh, Mrs. Mead! if I am not quick he may never see her again in this world. Dear Mrs. Mead, since you will stop, run up to him now, dear heart, while I got my bonnet. I will be very quick. Do you mind, I have courage to be quick since she is living. Straight up, Mrs. Mead, to the right. Stay, I will show thee. Oh, God grant him a little life!"

She ran upstairs swiftly, yet with light feet, and Mrs. Mead went laboriously, quivering and stumbling after her. Outside the door quite clearly was the groaning of the man heard. He lay on his back looking toward the wall, and in the gloom of the room his face was scarcely distinguishable from the pillow for the whiteness of it.

With finger on her lip Mrs. Strangfield motioned to Mrs. Mead to take the chair by the bedside; and, nimbly appareling herself, she came to the old woman's ear and breathlessly delivered instructions. They were simple enough, and to Mrs. Mead's discretion was left the explanation of her presence if Strangfield should observe her. But, truly, there seemed little chance of this; never once, since lifted from the parlor floor and laid upon the bed, had he stirred, and that should be over three hours. At regular intervals he groaned, and as his wife glided out of the room he called for Jenny.

CHAPTER XXIV.

JENNY AND HER MOTHER.

Just out of High street, not a stone's throw from the church, lived Mr. Franklin, who owned the Swiftsure coach that plied between Greystone and the old city on the road to London.

He was a pudding-faced man, and shaped like a ball in that part of his body which the band of his breeches circled; and he stood, with his legs wide apart, sucking a straw at the gateway of his yard, wherein, under sheds, stood his rolling stock, when Mrs. Strangfield breathlessly came to him, and besought him, with clasped, entreating hands, instantly to order out one of his coaches, that she might be driven to Winston.

Now, fortunately for her, Franklin was a prompt man; and reading urgency in the poor woman's desperate face, he gave a shrill whistle, and out from a little office tumbled a knock-kneed hostler.

"Number Two, Jeremy, and Sarah's your gal. Let Thomas scrape himself, and tell him the lady's waiting," said Mr. Franklin; and with dispatch that would pleasure this electric age to experience, a coach rattled up to the gate.

"To the Greyhound, at Winston, as quick as ever you can gallop," cried Mrs. Strangfield; and in a trice the heavy-wheeled vehicle was scattering loungers in the roadway on to the pavements, and making the shop windows clink to the thunder of its progress.

Still, it was a half-hour's drive, and a terribly hustling one.

At last the village lay in sight; a little row of cottages swept by, and the coach came to a stand in front of the glass door of the Greyhound inn. The man descended from the box of the coach, though already she was spraining her wrist in desperate efforts to open the door for herself; and no sooner was she liberated than she flew into the arms of Sally, who, having caught sight of the coach from a window, was running to the door.

"Are you the mistress?" said Mrs. Strangfield, in a wild way.

"Yes, I be, ma'am," replied Sally, with a civil courtesy.

"Is there a lady here?"

"Ay, an' ye be her mother, I reckon."

"I am her mother. Take me to her at once."

Though Sally had been fortified with a dozen scruples, they would have been helplessly swept away by the peremptoriness of this command.

"She's just where Mrs. Mead left her, ma'am. This way, please," and she went to the parlor door and threw it open, saying: "Here be thy mother, mistress."

Jenny was standing at the window overlooking the green space of garden at the back of the house. With a stupefied face on her she turned, and a cry left her lips, and she stepped back a pace when her mother rushed to her. Then, like a flash of night at the sight of the beloved face, an impulse of love and joy leaped up in her; and in close, sobbing embrace were they locked as Sally, looking away from the sacred sight, closed the door upon them.

"Oh, Jenny, why are you here? why didst thou leave me?" cried Mrs. Strangfield, relinquishing her daughter to gaze at her, with eyes in which rapture and sorrow were strangely blended. "Never was mother's heart wrung as mine was when this mornin' I beheld your bed untouched, and you were not near to answer to my call."

"I could not stay. Father would have taken me to London to-day; and see what a mad journey it would have been, and how cruel my ignorance would make him!" the girl said, pushing back her hair, and standing in a half defiant, half drooping posture before her mother.

"Thy father! Oh, Jenny! not only is my love for thee that has brought me here in mad haste—thy father is dying! Ay, he may be dead before we can return to him!"

"Dying!—Mother, what do you say?"

"Said Jenny, talking, so to speak, a firmer hold of the floor with her feet, and frowning, while a sickly hue of pallor overspread her face."

"Oh, Jenny! for the sake of God who hath brought me to thee, put on your hat and come with me quickly. I tell you your father is dying—he fell to the ground when Dr. Shaw brought him proof of your marriage with Cuthbert. Dost not thee know that the doctor has proved thee his son's wife? Ah, my poor heart, how should she know!—and that the cause of thy husband's illness, as the doctor believes, is that he was seized by the press gang and carried away to sea! Down thy father fell, and we have him to his room, and the surgeon fears for his life; and all the while he lies groaning and crying upon thy name. 'Bring Jenny to me! bring Jenny to me!' he moans. My pretty, come quickly, or you'll see him no more in this world."

The girl stood transfixed and overwhelmed by her mother's news. Then she could have seen her battling with the rush and surge of tumultuous emotions a whole minute ere she spoke.

"Do you tell me that my darling is carried away to sea?" she said, in a feeble whisper.

"That's what his father believes."

"And that Dr. Shaw hath proved me his son's wife to my father?"

"Yes, indeed. He came with a paper, and the sight of it hath killed thy father. His heart is broken for the wrong he has done his only one!" wailed the mother. "Oh, Jenny, do not delay! There is a coach at the door. Make haste to put on your hat. You would not let him be meaning for thee in dying sorrow and not come!"

She looked at her mother with a wonderful expression of troubled amazement and incredulous horror in her eyes, then took up her hat, and in a few minutes was ready to depart. As she left the room she met Mrs. Walker, into whose hand she slipped a guinea, giving her a sweet, strange smile as she did so, but quite powerless to speak.

The woman, much affected by Jenny's confidence, put the little trunk into the coach, and low and numerous were the courtesies she dropped as it drove off.

The rattle of wheel and window, if not a prohibition to speech, was a decided obstacle to the bearing. But Mrs. Strangfield had too much to say to hold her peace. With her child's hand locked in hers she poured her heart into Jenny's ear, and all the story of Dr. Shaw's visit told her, and the medical man's judgment on Michael's condition, with whatever else that her head was giddy with—sometimes reproaching and sometimes breaking into passionate exclamations of rapture, which thoughts of her husband would inevitably choke; silent scarcely ever, and of the matter of her volubility leaving Jenny, amid the roar of the coach, in possession of but very small fragments.

And the girl?

Her father knew at last that she was honest, and for a brief while had exultation, of the kind that inflames the madman's eye, swelled until it had sickened her heart with the force and fulness of it. But the emotion died under the heavy drop of humiliated honor. She had won back her name, but what had the victory cost her? Her husband was gone, her father was dying, her heart was wounded and bleeding badly.

The bitter passion of shame that had driven her from Greystone revisited her again when the coach entered the High street, and she leaned back and involuntarily drew her veil over her face. The mother stopped the coach at the corner of the street, that the jar of the wheels might not penetrate the resonant wooden house, and alighted with her daughter, and both of them went quickly in.

"Mother," whispered Jenny, standing in the passage as a stranger might, "I will stay here till you have seen him."

"In the parlor, then, dearest, and rest thee. Oh, Jenny, pray God to spare him! He is thy father."

Softly the poor woman climbed the stairs, and Jenny went into the little room which, in all her life, she had vowed never again to enter. Speculating she stood, wondering how it had befallen that her mother had come so speedily.

Then through the doorway came a whisper—"Jenny!"

She went out, and on the stairs she saw her mother, who for despair could only beckon or toss her hands. She followed Mrs. Strangfield upstairs, with a creeping chill over her limbs, and the sensation of a thousand quivering fibers in her body.

In the bedroom near the bed were two figures whom she could not immediately distinguish for the feeble light in the chamber; but she speedily found that one was Mrs. Mead and the other the doctor.

Both figures drew away when mother and daughter came into the room. Mrs. Strangfield went to the bedside, and, bending over the motionless form upon it, said, in a whisper of exquisite sadness:

"Michael, Jenny is here. Wilt thou speak to her?"

For some moments there was no answer. At last, in a faint, hoarse murmur, the dying man said:

"Let her take my hand and kiss me. Jane, thee knowest that I cannot move."

The girl went to her father, and put her hand into his and kissed his forehead.

"Jenny, my little one," he murmured, "thou didst wrong to trick me. Of old did the prophet child, saying, 'And thou saidst, I shall be a lady forever; so that, thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it.' But thy punishment has been sore, my poor one. By these am I condemned, whom I condemned. I was a liar for speaking what, in my wrath, I believed the truth; and it did nearly break thy heart, poor wench, as mine is broken!"

No pathos, the meaning of his words had could equal the deeply moving effect given to



THIS MONTH

"Jenny, my little one," he murmured, "thou didst wrong to trick me. Of old did the prophet child, saying, 'And thou saidst, I shall be a lady forever; so that, thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it.' But thy punishment has been sore, my poor one. By these am I condemned, whom I condemned. I was a liar for speaking what, in my wrath, I believed the truth; and it did nearly break thy heart, poor wench, as mine is broken!"

No pathos, the meaning of his words had could equal the deeply moving effect given to

"I could not stay. Father would have taken me to London to-day; and see what a mad journey it would have been, and how cruel my ignorance would make him!" the girl said, pushing back her hair, and standing in a half defiant, half drooping posture before her mother.

"Thy father! Oh, Jenny! not only is my love for thee that has brought me here in mad haste—thy father is dying! Ay, he may be dead before we can return to him!"

"Dying!—Mother, what do you say?"

"Said Jenny, talking, so to speak, a firmer hold of the floor with her feet, and frowning, while a sickly hue of pallor overspread her face."